

Film Theory
Fall 99
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The course examines the major aesthetic and other theoretical issues developed in film theory and practice. Intended as an introduction (primarily) for students studying film theory for the first time, it studies aesthetic and cultural issues as a background to film theory, surveys the major figures and issues in film theory, and makes connections to related media and cultural analysis. The first quarter of the course is an introduction and historical overview. The second quarter concentrates on contemporary discussions in greater depth and will not be taught in 99-2000.

The course is organized as a reading, lecture, and discussion experience. Readings should be done in advance and brought to class. The lectures will provide a broad background to the readings, discuss some particular points in the readings in detail, and provide the experience of seeing how one theorist, the teacher, uses theory. Discussion of particular readings and screenings of some films (and excerpts) will be part of most classes. Students will be assigned several short essays and a take home final. Attendance is taken into account in the final grade.

Students without a background in film studies will concentrate on a core set of readings and background readings on film studies. Additional outside screenings will be expected to fill in the gaps for students who are not familiar with, say, Italian neorealism. Students with a background in film history and critical thought will do the core readings and a series of advanced theoretical essays and some commentary.

All students are required to have an e-mail address. Reading summaries and short essays will be distributed to the entire class by e-mail. In addition some readings will be on Electronic Reserve at the library.

Required texts. Available at Norris Center Store

Hill, J. and P. C. Gibson (1998). The Oxford Guide to Film Studies. New York, Oxford University Press.

Braudy, L. and M. Cohen, Eds. (1999). Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings. NY, Oxford UP.

additional text: (late arrival) Francesco Casetti, Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995. Austin: U Texas Press. 1999.

Sept 21
course admin
introduction

Sept 23
intro to aesthetics
Raymond Williams, "Realism" (ER--electronic reserve)
Richard Dyer, "Intro to Film Studies" (OxGuide pp 3-10)

Sept 28
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (FT&C, 731-751)
report: Benjamin in context
background--Kolker, "Film Text and Film Form" and Wood and Wollen, OxGuide 11-29)

Sept 30
Munsterberg, "The Means of the Photoplay" (FT&C, 401-408)
report one: Munsterberg
Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," "The Mass Ornament" (ER)
report two: Kracauer, "Little Shopgirls go to the Movies" (McEwan)

Oct 5
Jean Epstein, "On Magnification," (ER)

"The Senses I (b), " (ER)

"On Certain Characteristics of Photogenie" (ER)

report: early French film theories (Lewis) Dulac, "The Expressive Techniques of the Cinema" (in Abel)

Balázs, The Close Up, (FT&C)

Report: Balázs, The Face of Man (FT&C) (Perkins-Buzo)

Oct 7

Ian Christie, "Formalism and new-formalism" (in OxGuide, pp 58-65)

Shlovsky, "Poetry and Prose in Cinema"

Report: on Vertov, (Booth)

Documents from Lef (handout)

Vertov, "Cine Eyes: A Revolution"

Shub, "Factory of Facts"

Shlovsky, "Where is Dziga Vertov Striding?"

Oct 12

Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" (FT&C 15-25)

"A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," (FT&C 25-43)

Report: Dialectic (Alter)

Oct 14

Brecht "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" (ER)

Arnheim "In Praise of Blindness" (ER)

Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound" (FT&C 360)

report--issues of sound (overview) (Meister)

screening: CORRECTION PLEASE (Noel Burch)

Oct 19

Richter, The Struggle for Film (exerpts) (handout)

Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today" (FT&C)

Report on Dickens, (Buxbaum)

Report on MPAA code (_____)

Oct 21

Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Film" (FT&C, pp 43-56)

Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (FT&C, pp 195-8)

Oct 26

Bazin "An Aesthetic of Reality" (ER)

background, Morticelli, "Italian Postwar Cinema..." OxGuide455-460

report: Menon & Kerr

paper no. 2 due

Oct 28

review of papers

intro Classic Hollywood cinema (handout)

Nov 2

Crofts, Authorship and Hollywood

Butler, The star system and Hollywood

read--one additional essay from FT&C on authorship or star (any in section V pp 509-606) paper no 3 (or on nov. 4)

Nov 4

Ryall, Genre and Hollywood

Williams, on melodrama (handout)

read--one additional essay on genre from FT&C (section VI pp607-724) paper no 3) or nov. 2)

Nov 9

Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema" FT&C

Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" FT&C

Nov 11

screening: Morocco. (excerpt)

Cahiers du cinéma, Morocco analysis (handout)

Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" FT&C

Nov 16

Creed, Film and Psychoanalysis

August, "The Turn toward Psychoanalysis" [handout]

Heath, "Narrative Space" [handout]

Nov 18

screening: Two Or Three Things I Know About Her
or other Godard film

Nov 23

TBA

Nov 30

TBA

Dec 2

wrap up lecture

screening for final

Final

--take home essay due []

Short paper no. 1 10% of final. A 500 word summary of an assigned reading

Short paper no. 2 10% of final. A 500 word essay providing a critical context for an assigned reading, screening, issue, or figure discussed in the course. This will be assigned by the instructor, and presented orally in class as well as published in written form.

Summary no. 1. 20% of final. A 500 word summary plus a 1000 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography on Eisenstein, Kracauer, or Bazin. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge.

Summary no. 2. 20% of final. Another 500 word summary plus a 1200 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography and filmography. You will summarize an article that depends on analysis of one film (such as the editors of Cahiers du cinéma on Young Mr. Lincoln) and view the film. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge of the film.

Final take home essay. 30 % of final grade. 1500-2500 word essay in response to a question handed out at the end of the course intended to synthesize your learning in the course. Due in Chuck's mailbox and e-mail

articles on Electronic Reserve

Raymond Williams, "Realism" in Williams, Keywords (Oxford)

Seigfried Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," and "The Mass Ornament" in

Kracauer, The Mass Ornament (Harvard) FOOTNOTES

Jean Epstein, "On Magnification," and "The Senses I (b), and "On Certain Characteristics of Photogenic" in Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 1. vol. 2 FOOTNOTES

B. Brecht "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" in Strauss, N., Ed. (1993). Radiotext(e). NY, Semiotext(e).

R. Arnheim "In Praise of Blindness" in Strauss, N., Ed. (1993). Radiotext(e). NY, Semiotext(e).

Bazin "An Aesthetic of Reality" in Bazin, A. (1967). What Is Cinema? Berkeley, U of CA. vol. II. Berkeley, U of CA.

Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space" in Heath, Questions of Cinema (Indiana)

BOOKS

The following books have been requested for two hour reserve in the library:

Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 1

Abel, R., Ed. (1988). French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. Princeton, Princeton UP. vol. 2

Arnheim, R. (1968). Film as Art. Berkeley, U of CA.

Aumont, J. and M. M. Alain Bergala, and Marc Vernet, (1992). Aesthetics of Film. Austin, U of TX.

Balázs, B. (1970). Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art. NY, Dover.

Bazin, A. (1967). What Is Cinema? Berkeley, U of CA.

Bazin, A. (1971). What is Cinema? vol. II. Berkeley, U of CA.

Browne, N., Ed. (1990). Cahiers du Cinéma, 1969-1972: The Politics of Representation. Cambridge MA, Harvard UP.

Carson, D. and a. L. D. a. J. R. Welsch, Eds. (1994). Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Minneapolis, U of Minnesota Press

Eagle, H., Ed. (1981). Russian Formalist Film Theory. Ann Arbor, Michigan Slavic Publications.

Hake, S. (1993). The Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on film in Germany, 1907-1933. Lincoln, U of NE.

Heath, S. (1981). Questions of Cinema. Bloomington, Indiana UP.

Kracauer, S. (1960). Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality. NY, Oxford UP.

Mast, G., Ed. (1982). The Movies in Our Midst. Chicago, U of Chicago.

Metz, C. (1974). *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. NY, Oxford.

Michelson, A., Ed. (1984). *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley, U of CA.

Münsterberg, H. (1970). *The Film: A Psychological Study: The Silent Photoplay in 1916*. NY, Dover.

Nichols, B., Ed. (1976). *Movies and Methods*. Berkeley, U of CA.

Nichols, B., Ed. (1985). *Movies and Methods II*. Berkeley, U of CA.

Richter, H. *The Struggle for Film*.

Rosen, P., Ed. (1986). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*. NY, Columbia UP.

Sarris, A. (1968). *The American Cinema: Directors and directions, 1929-1968*. NY, E. P. Dutton.

Sontag, S. (1966). *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. NY, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Strauss, N., Ed. (1993). *Radiotext(e)*. NY, Semiotext(e).

Taylor, R. and I. Christie, Eds. (1988). *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*. Cambridge MA, Harvard UP.

Wollen, P. (1972). *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. Bloomington, Indiana UP.

Wollen, P. (1982). *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies*. London, Verso.